

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

Other names/site number: Ashtabula Municipal Building

Name of related multiple property listing:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 4400 Main Avenue

City or town: Ashtabula State: Ohio County: Ashtabula

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

<p><u>Barbara Power</u> DSHPO Inventory &amp; Registration <u>March 7, 2019</u></p>	
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b><u>State Historic Preservation Office, Ohio History Connection</u></b>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

6/17/19  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register NA

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/Post Office

GOVERNMENT/City Hall

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Beaux Arts

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Terra Cotta, Stone

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Ashtabula Post Office/Municipal Building, located at 4400 Main Avenue in Ashtabula, Ohio, is a U-shaped building that occupies the northeast corner of West 44th Street and Main Avenue. The building, designed in the Beaux Arts architectural style, is two stories high with a raised basement, and is constructed in brick with stone and terra cotta accents and features. It was designed through the office of James Knox Taylor, supervising architect of the United States Treasury. Located in the heart of Ashtabula's downtown adjacent to a commercial district primarily built in the late 19th-early 20th century, it was built in 1910 as the Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building, and renovated in 1965, when it became the Ashtabula Municipal Building. Despite its condition, the Ashtabula Post Office and Municipal Building has a substantial amount of historic material remaining, especially on its exterior, and has historic integrity.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

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## **Narrative Description**

### Setting

The Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building is located on the southeast corner of Main Avenue and West 44th Street. The building is located on the north end of a commercial area that dates largely from the late 19th to mid-20th centuries. A parking area is found to the rear of the building, and an alley lined with brick pavers is found to the south side. A chain-link fence surrounds the property boundary.

### Exterior

The building consists of two stories and a raised basement (Photos 1 and 2). The building follows a U-shaped plan. The building sits on a granite stone block foundation slightly flared toward the base. The building's masonry consists of blond glazed bricks laid in a stretcher bond, and the roof on the original building is flat and consists of rolled bitumen.

The façade faces west toward Main Avenue. The raised basement features deeply recessed rectangular windows covered with steel bars. Most of the basement windows are original to the building. A projecting portico leads to the front entrance, with two sets of concrete steps on either side. Between the steps is a large marble wall with engravings that display a quote from President John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural address, "Ask not what your country can do for you, Ask what you can do for your country". This new entrance detail was installed in 1964-65 as part of the conversion of the building to municipal offices.

The front façade consists of five bays, with the front entrance located on the central (third) bay. Each bay is slightly recessed, giving the space between bays an appearance that resembles pilasters. The entryway is surrounded by terra cotta architrave trim topped with an escutcheon within a broken segmental pediment. Although the door itself appears to be a late 20th century aluminum replacement door, the door's sidelights and a transom with words reading "Municipal Building" are still visible. Copper light fixtures are placed on either side of the entryway (Photo 8). Windows on the façade's first story are 6/6 steel-framed casement windows with a four fixed pane windows above them. The windows have terra cotta architrave trim with decorative terra cotta panels underneath the sills. They also feature a decorative crown topped with either a triangular or segmental terra cotta pediment (they alternate).

In contrast, the second story windows on the façade are similar to the 6/6 casement windows on the first story, but they are not accented with fixed pane windows on top. Below all of the windows are terra cotta panels decorated with an accented floral swag. The crowns on each second story windows are topped with keystones. A belt course lines the span of the façade above the second story windows and below the cornice; they are accented by terra-cotta eagle motifs on both the north and south corners (Photo 9). Above the belt course, flush with the brickwork in the center of the entablature is a stone panel with the engraved words 'Ashtabula

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

Municipal Building.’ The cornice itself has a decorative architrave and elaborated dentils that span the entire façade.

The south and north elevations both have seven bays, although they have striking differences. The south elevation consists of a single wall, with a side entrance on the first floor located on the second bay toward the rear of the building (Photos 6 and 7). Windows are similar in appearance to the front façade, with alternating triangular and segmental pediments crowning each window and door space. The belt course and cornice continues along the top of the building. In comparison, the north elevation has two walls, which creates a corner between the third and fourth bay from the front façade (Photo 3). The two walls are angled to follow the property line. Another side entrance is located on the third bay from the front façade. It is on the west side of the north elevation that the basement level is slightly more raised, for there is an entryway on the basement level on the first bay from the front façade. Windows and door spaces are similar to the façade.

The rear elevation consists of two wings that are two bays wide with windows that are 6/6 casement windows with brick flat arch lintels, but otherwise not ornamented (Photo 4). A one-story wing on the rear elevation, built in the 1950s, has a similar brick pattern and foundation as the original 1910 building. An entrance to the wing is on its southwest corner, with a wheelchair ramp leading to the door (Photo 5). The wing is void of windows on the south elevation, has four windows on the rear elevation (one window space has been bricked over), and three on the north elevation. All windows on the east elevation are 8/12 wood framed double-hung windows with stone sills and no ornamentation. The roof on the rear wing is flat and protrudes over the north and south elevations.

### Interior

The first area of the building one approaches when entering is the lobby. The lobby is two stories tall. A stairwell is located in the lobby toward the north elevation. The stairwell’s steps are polished stone with metal risers, and a bannister with ironwork (Photo 10). The stairs stop at a landing before continuing to the second story (Photo 11). To the right hand side of the lobby there is an entrance to the City Manager’s Office. An auditorium/conference room is located toward the north elevation. Office spaces on the first and second story are accessible through a central hall (Photo 12). This is the configuration of the office from its time as serving as Ashtabula’s Municipal Building after 1965. Many spaces in the interior of the building are not accessed due to deteriorating conditions in the building itself. Remnants of ornamental plaster moldings and ceiling details are evident above the dropped ceilings.

### Alterations/Integrity

The 1910 building originally had a railing above its cornice and classically inspired balusters located in line with each bay (see Attachment B, Figures 1 and 2). It is unknown when the railing was removed, but it is possible it was removed as part of a remodeling in 1964. The 1964 remodeling also resulted in the marble block with the quote from President Kennedy in front of

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

the building. Additionally, the stone panel which reads “Ashtabula Municipal Building” once read “United States Post Office”. The one-story wing on the rear of the building was an addition made in the 1950s, when it was still used as Ashtabula’s Post Office. Shortly before the building was renamed the Ashtabula Municipal Building in 1965, the interior was renovated, with new partitions and the addition of dropped ceilings. The original materials of the old Post Office were generally covered up, not removed. Although the interior spaces of the building resemble more of what it appeared after 1965, there are portions of the interior that have significant original material remaining.

The Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building maintains historic integrity despite its condition issues. Classically-inspired architectural characteristics in the Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building include its overall grandiose architectural statement displaying an exuberance of details and variety of finishes. The building largely retains its original appearance on the exterior, as well as retaining historic materials and workmanship on the exterior and interior. The brick exterior includes a granite raised foundation, alternating pediment and semi-circular terra cotta window and door surrounds spaced between brick pilasters and topped by an ornamental terra cotta entablature and brick parapet. Terra cotta medallions, eagles, and swags add to the exterior’s details. The interior displays an impressive marble staircase with ornamental metal railings. Decorative plaster moldings and ceiling remnants remain above the dropped ceilings on the first floor. The Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building is in its original location and the setting is mostly intact, as the layout and general appearance of Ashtabula’s downtown have not changed much since the end of the period of its significance, and the building also has a feeling and association as a public building. The building’s placement on its site with surrounding open space and facing the city park defining the northern edge of the commercial district adds to its distinctive presence in the downtown.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years



Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1910-1965

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1910, 1963

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Taylor, James Knox \_\_\_\_\_

R.S. Moore & Co. (contractors)

\_\_\_\_\_

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of politics/government, for its role as a Post Office and Federal Building. Its construction represents a trend by the United States Post Office during the early years of the 20th century when the design of federally-owned buildings was directed by Supervising Architect, James Knox Taylor. The building is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture, for being a significant example of a Beaux Arts style public building, especially one located in a small city. The building's classically-inspired architecture and setting facing onto a public park reflects the Federal government's prevailing philosophy during the early 20th century of building monumental buildings that add to the overall architectural character and make a statement within a locality. The period of significance begins in 1910; the year construction was completed on the building, until 1965, when the building was converted into Ashtabula's municipal building.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Early History of Ashtabula**

The name Ashtabula is the softening of a Seneca term which was first applied to the river. The name said to signify many fish. It was pronounced originally by the Native Americans as Hash-tah-buh-lah. This heavily forested area of the former Connecticut Western Reserve was initially settled by European Americans around 1798. The area of which is now Ashtabula was settled in 1803. It was also in 1803 when the first mail route through Ashtabula County was established, which connected Warren northward to Ashtabula County, then west to Painesville and Cleveland.<sup>1</sup> Five years later, a mail route from Erie, Pennsylvania to Cleveland was established, which stopped in Ashtabula itself. Roads during this time were primitive and often impassable, and it would take twelve days to travel on horseback from Ashtabula to Buffalo, New York when road conditions were good.

The first Turnpike road serving Ashtabula was established in 1819, and this road carried stagecoaches back and forth from Ashtabula and Warren for the next few decades. In 1836, the Ashtabula, Warren and East Liverpool Railroad Company was chartered, with a capital of \$1.5 million. Some work was done on this railroad until the effects of the Panic of 1837 set in. The line was never finished, and it would not be until 1853 when another railroad line in Ashtabula County (the Ashtabula and New Lisbon Railroad) would be chartered.<sup>2</sup> Even before the arrival of a railroad line, the main street of Ashtabula was starting to take

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<sup>1</sup> William W. Williams, *History of Ashtabula County, Ohio* (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers Publishers, 1878)

<sup>2</sup> Harry F. Lupold and Gladys Haddad, *Ohio's Western Reserve: A Regional Reader* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1988)

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH

County and State

shape, with numerous stores, churches and hotels lining Main Avenue, which itself was located on a main road that connected Ashtabula to Warren (much of this route still exists as Ohio Route 46).

### Early History of Ashtabula Harbor

Approximately two miles north of the village of Ashtabula was the settlement of Ashtabula Harbor (see Attachment B, Figure 3). Development of the harbor began as early as 1826, when Congress appropriated \$12,000 for Ashtabula Harbor to develop its port. The first lighthouse in Ashtabula Harbor was constructed by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1835.<sup>3</sup> From around 1830 to the 1850s, when the first railroad arrived in Ashtabula, the harbor was connected to Ashtabula via stagecoach, which allowed commerce and trade to take place between the two villages. Like many ports on the Great Lakes, Ashtabula Harbor also had a growing shipbuilding industry. A commercial area began to emerge around Bridge Street immediately south of the Harbor. Although strategically positioned at an ideal location between Cleveland and Erie, Pennsylvania and steamships had regularly stopped in Ashtabula Harbor to deliver goods, Ashtabula Harbor's growth was held in check due to the lack of a railway line. It is interesting to point out that the Ashtabula and New Lisbon Railroad owned the right-of-way to build a railroad from the Harbor to New Lisbon (now Lisbon), Ohio, but the funds to build the railroad never materialized, as the Ashtabula and New Lisbon Railroad went into bankruptcy in 1869.<sup>4</sup>

In 1870, the Pittsburgh, Youngstown, and Ashtabula Railroad line purchased the Ashtabula and New Lisbon Railroad's right-of-way, and the result was a railroad line built in 1872-1873 that connected Ashtabula Harbor with Youngstown and Pittsburgh. In July 1873, the schooner *Emma Maise* delivered the first load of iron ore from Lake Superior to Ashtabula Harbor.<sup>5</sup> This event proved to be the turning point for both Ashtabula and Ashtabula Harbor. Ashtabula Harbor became one of the major ports on the Great Lakes, becoming the link between the extraction of iron ore from northern Minnesota, and developments in the iron and steel industry in Pittsburgh and Youngstown. As a result, industry boomed in Ashtabula Harbor, with improvements made to the Harbor and a marked growth in the number and size of the buildings in the commercial district, which was centered on Bridge Street.

Eventually, the villages of Ashtabula and Ashtabula Harbor would consolidate in the 1870s, with formal incorporation of the city of Ashtabula occurring in 1891. The population of Ashtabula before consolidation with Ashtabula Harbor was 1,999 (1870 Census). By 1900, Ashtabula's population would reach a figure of nearly 13,000. This great increase in population was almost entirely due with Ashtabula's important niche as a port that received and shipped iron ore.

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<sup>3</sup> Lupold and Haddad, *Ohio's Western Reserve*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *History of Ashtabula County*.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH

County and State

## The Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

By the time Ashtabula and Ashtabula Harbor consolidated, Main Street in Ashtabula was already well-developed as a commercial hub, despite the growth in Ashtabula's Harbor. The earliest Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Ashtabula (1884 and 1889) display a great concentration of commercial buildings along Main Avenue, especially between the two parks on Main Avenue- North Park (located on the northwest corner of West 44th and Main) and South Park (located between 49th and 50th Streets on Main Avenue). Prior to 1910, the Ashtabula Post Office was also located on Main Avenue, approximately two blocks south of the future Post Office. The lot where the future Post Office would be built was occupied by a number of single family houses prior to 1900, and was empty by 1909 (Attachment B, Figure 4). Note: the 1909 and 1917 Sanborn Maps lists Main Avenue as Main Street and West 44th Street as Booth Street, suggesting that the street names had been changed.

The driving force behind the construction of a new post office was a 1907 bill proposed by Congressman Aubrey Thomas of Niles, Ohio, that called for "A public building at Ashtabula, Ohio to Committee or Public Buildings and Grounds." Supervising Architect for the U.S. Treasury Department, James Knox Taylor appropriated funds for purchasing the site and the building's construction from June 1906 to June 1910.<sup>6</sup> The contractors to build the new Post Office were R.S. Moore and Company from Danville, Illinois. The building broke ground on July 20, 1910, and the building was completed at a price of just under \$100,000.

A dedication ceremony took place in Ashtabula on October 15, 1910. Approximately three to four thousand people attended the ceremony. Among the special guests were Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor and Congressman Thomas.<sup>7</sup> The Post Office was located on the first floor of the building; various federal offices were located on the second floor. The building continued to be an anchor of the north side of Ashtabula's downtown for the next five decades (Attachment B, Figures 5 and 6).

On November 4, 1962 a new post office in Ashtabula was dedicated (it is currently in use) and the city of Ashtabula was able to buy the old Post Office in 1964.<sup>8</sup> Dalton and Dalton Associates of Cleveland were awarded the contract to renovate the old Post Office, at a price of \$350,000. Starting in late 1964, the renovation was completed by April 1965. The building was then rededicated as the Ashtabula Municipal Building on June 24, 1965.<sup>9</sup> The Municipal Building continued to serve in this capacity until the early 2000s. It has been vacant since 2004.

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<sup>6</sup> *Post Office Department Annual Report 1910, Office of Supervising Architect* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911).

<sup>7</sup> *Ashtabula Telegraph*, October 19, 1910.

<sup>8</sup> *Ashtabula Star Beacon*, October 6, 1964.

<sup>9</sup> *Ashtabula Star Beacon*, May 12, 1965.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH

County and State

### **Criterion A-**

### **Government/Post Office History**

The Ashtabula Post Office reflects the growth of Ashtabula and significant trends in postal services and building construction, represented by federal building philosophy and postal legislation during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

One of the most important services instituted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was rural free delivery. Rural free delivery, which was promoted by farmers and farm-related organizations like the National Grange, was established nationwide in 1899 after having been tested in several locations during the 1890s. Following its establishment, local governments invested in improving roads in order to qualify for rural delivery service.<sup>10</sup> The rural free delivery service also resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of buildings designated as post offices in small rural locations (not necessarily built as a post office by the Federal government). Many of these locations for post offices had been supported by the necessity of rural citizens traveling to the nearest village or town to pick up their mail. The number of post offices was at its peak in 1901, with 76, 945 and decreased by 1,000 the next year.<sup>11</sup> Rural delivery and the passage of Parcel Post in 1913 spurred an increase in the publishing business by offering inexpensive rates and wide distribution of newspapers, journals, magazines, catalogs, and paperback books. Mail order businesses benefited from reduced rates catalogs, rural free delivery, and parcel post service. The publishing business also flourished as the Post Office instituted Congressional franking, special newspaper rates, and the acceptance of books for delivery.

Ashtabula established rural free delivery in October 1900 offering the first rural delivery in Jefferson County. By 1909 Ohio would rank second only to Illinois for number of rural delivery routes at 2,529 with Illinois at 2,835.<sup>12</sup> By the dedication of the new Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building in 1910, Ashtabula's postal service had grown from 3 carriers in 1892 to 12 carriers, 6 rural carriers, and total staff of 40 employees.<sup>13</sup>

Postal Savings Banks was an additional service provided by the Post Office by 1910. These banking services were authorized in order to encourage thrift, increase the amount of money in circulation, and provide security, especially for those without access to banks. They became particularly popular during the Great Depression of the 1930s, until the creation of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which gave similar guarantees to deposits with customers at private banks. Eventually, the program would discontinue in 1967.<sup>14</sup> Repositories for Postal Savings Banks were chosen by merit, not by geography, and

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<sup>10</sup> *Publication 100: The United States Postal Service: An American History, 1775-2006, 2012.* Online document, accessed February 20, 2019, <https://about.usps.com/publications/pub100/welcome.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Beth M. Boland, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices*, Revised ed. National Register Bulletin No. 13. (Washington: Interagency Resources Division, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, US Government Printing Office, 1984) p 2.

<sup>12</sup> *The Bryan Democrat*, October 8, 1909.

<sup>13</sup> *Ashtabula Telegraph*, December 14, 1910, p 5.

<sup>14</sup> USPS 2012.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

Ashtabula County, OH

Name of Property

County and State

most of them were located in small towns and cities. The Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building was designated as a Postal Savings Bank in 1911 and provided training for the opening of other postal banks in Ohio and other states.<sup>15</sup>

The buildings constructed for use as post offices have reflected various government and architectural philosophies. The Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury was an agency of the Treasury Department that operated from 1852 to 1939,<sup>16</sup> and was responsible for designing federal buildings and monuments. Prior to the Tursney Act of 1893, all designs for government buildings were created in-house. The Tursney Act of 1893 permitted the Supervising Architect to hold competitions for private architects to design federal buildings.<sup>17</sup> During his tenure beginning in 1897 through 1912, Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor soon realized the difficulty of attracting high quality architects to design smaller scale projects and held competitions for private architects to bid only for the largest building contracts, typically in larger urban locations.<sup>18</sup>

The architectural styles of Federal buildings tended to follow stylistic preferences and philosophies of the incumbent Supervising Architect. During Taylor's tenure, the Federal government promoted the concept that government buildings should be monumental, classically-inspired beautiful buildings that added to the overall architectural character of the local buildings. Taylor resisted the ideas of standardization in building design and called for government buildings to be derived from classical or early American influences and use high-quality construction materials. Taylor's creation of classical buildings built to last and seen as symbols of democratic ideals reflected the broader late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural trend known as the American Renaissance expressed in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition that influenced city planning through the City Beautiful Movement.<sup>19</sup>

In 1902, an omnibus public buildings law was passed by Congress, facilitating the construction of federally-owned properties. Before the omnibus law, individual legislation would have to be passed in order for a public building to be authorized. As a result of the law, the number of properties built tripled from 1899 to 1912.<sup>20</sup> Most of these buildings were post offices located in small towns and cities and the vast majority were designed in-house by the Supervising Architect's Office. The Ashtabula Post Office's Beaux Arts style, materials, and location near a public park in Ashtabula's commercial downtown, reflects this federal design approach.

Opponents of the Tursney Act of 1893 became more vocal in the 1910s, claiming that expenditures to private architects were being made while there were already a substantial

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<sup>15</sup> *Ashtabula Telegraph*, May 31, 1911, p 8.

<sup>16</sup> Antoinette Lee, *Architects of the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Boland, p 3.

<sup>19</sup> *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940* (Washington: United States Postal Services, 1982) pp 4-5; USPS 2012, p 3.

<sup>20</sup> USPS 1982, pp 3-4.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

Ashtabula County, OH

Name of Property

County and State

number of in-house architects employed at the Supervising Architect's Office. The consequences of the Tursney Act had not been without controversy, as James Knox Taylor had chosen his former colleague and business partner Cass Gilbert to design the Alexander Hamilton Custom House (1907) in New York City. In 1912, Taylor himself testified before Congress to defend his stance on why federally-owned buildings were costing more to build than private buildings of similar size and scope. Taylor had iterated that unlike commercial properties, which could be standardized easily, a public building was best designed specifically to the needs of its community.<sup>21</sup> Despite Taylor's efforts and support from the AIA and the Treasury Department, the Tursney Act was repealed in 1912, and Taylor resigned from his post.

After 1912, Federal construction policy changed in response to concerns over the cost of public buildings projects and controversy over whether all the buildings authorized by Congress were truly needed. The 1913 Omnibus Public Buildings Act, which authorized the construction of a large number of public buildings, also prohibited the construction of new post office buildings in communities whose postal receipts totaled less than \$10,000. In the interest of economy and efficiency, the Department of the Treasury instituted a classification system under which a post office's structural and ornamental qualities were functions of the value of real estate and postal receipts in the city where it was to be located. Four classes were formulated. Class 'A' post offices in large cities would still be held to high architectural standards and high-quality building materials. Class 'B' post offices would be less ornate, but still with high-quality building materials. For Class 'C' or 'D' post offices, the standards specified an ordinary class of building with very little ornamentation.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to the policy implemented by James Knox Taylor, the Supervising Architect's Office standardized their designs and rarely employed private architects during this period, which continued through the 1920s.

Therefore, because of the new policies set forth, post offices built in small towns and cities after 1913 would exhibit more standardized designs, and the federally-owned Beaux-Arts examples of architecture would significantly diminish in small towns and cities after that date. The Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building represents a trend in Post Office history when James Knox Taylor used his post as Supervising Architect to commission high-style architecture using high-quality building materials in both small and large cities. The building exemplifies the intent of these federal building policies as described in an article, "The Largest Architectural Office in the World: the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury," in the March 1918 *The Architect*, a professional journal, stating: "They are generally the most important of local buildings, and taken together, seen daily by thousands, who have little opportunity to feel the influence of the great architectural works in the large cities."<sup>23</sup> The Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building is a locally important example of this trend and the reason why it is significant under Criterion A.

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<sup>21</sup> Lee.

<sup>22</sup> USPS 1982, pp 9-10.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p 7.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH

County and State

### **Criterion C -**

#### **The Beaux Arts Style**

The Ashtabula Post Office's Beaux Arts style reflects the architectural design preferences and philosophies of Supervising Architect Taylor and can be seen as part of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> American Renaissance expressed in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition represented in the broad urban planning concepts of the City Beautiful Movement.

The term "Beaux Arts," or "Fine Arts," had characteristics in common with other architectural styles, such as Classical Revival, but tended to have even more ornamentation than other revival styles. Broadly speaking, the term "Beaux Arts" is linked to the American Renaissance period from about 1880 to 1920 and encompassed the French Renaissance, Italian Renaissance, and Neoclassical Revivals. The style emphasized classical (Greek and Roman) forms and features, elaborate detailing, massive plans, and heavy masonry. A hallmark of the style is its elaborate, decorated surfaces with little area left unornamented. Grand arches and colossal columns or pilasters – often paired – are typically featured, along with other Renaissance and Baroque-era designs. More than any other popular style, the Beaux Arts style expressed the taste and values of America's Gilded Age. Great wealth and influence were not only displayed in increasingly ornate and expensive houses, but also were put on display with commissions of public buildings. In particular, monumental, grandiose public statements were seen as representing the power and prosperity of the United States at this time and its place in the world.

An important inspiration for this style was the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, the architects of which had been heavily influenced by the teachings of the Ecole de Beaux Arts. Thus, many of the early, prominent examples of Beaux Arts can be dated to within a decade of the turn of the 20th century. During this time, accuracy of styles became important once again, as interpretations of European styles were encouraged. The exposition displayed monumental, white classical buildings, brilliantly electrified – sparking in Americans the idea of beautifying entire cities. The City Beautiful Movement in urban planning advocated for the creation of beautiful and well-organized places for people to live and work with the broad vision that they would become better citizens and improve the quality of their lives.

Many of the leading late 19th century architects had been trained in France at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, like Richard Morris Hunt, H.H. Richardson, and Charles McKim, or attended an American school of architecture teaching the Ecole's design curriculum. The first such example being the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, its architecture program beginning in 1868. MIT's first Dean of Architecture, William Ware published in 1902 *American Vignola*, featuring a series of plates and instruction on classical architecture, emphasizing study of Greek and Roman structures, composition, symmetry. The Beaux Arts curriculum did not teach a specific style, but rather taught a logical, rational system to architectural design, emphasizing monumental architecture, symmetry, clear division and hierarchy of space, and impressive interiors.



Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

Ashtabula County, OH

Name of Property

County and State

James Knox Taylor was an architect trained in the Beaux Arts curriculum. After attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; he worked in the New York City office of Charles C. Haight and later with Bruce Price. In 1882 he moved to St. Paul, Minnesota where he formed a partnership with his former MIT classmate Cass Gilbert, as Gilbert & Taylor. Gilbert had previously worked for McKim, Mead, and White. Gilbert and Taylor's commissions of the 1880s and early 1890s reflected the prevailing Revivalist styles of the time, particularly Romanesque Revival and the influence of H. H. Richardson. By the time that Taylor became the Supervisory Architect of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, he was well acquainted with classically-influenced styles like Beaux Arts and believed that they were appropriate for public commissions.<sup>24</sup>

The Ashtabula Post Office's design reflects Taylor's architectural influence towards classically-inspired design that was present in the many federal buildings that were built in the period from 1897 to 1912. Classically-inspired Beaux Arts architectural characteristics in the Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building include its overall grandiose architectural statement displaying an exuberance of details and variety of finishes. The brick exterior includes a granite raised foundation, alternating pediment and semi-circular terra cotta window and door surrounds spaced between brick pilasters and topped by an ornamental terra cotta entablature and brick parapet. Terra cotta medallions, eagles, and swags add to the exterior's details. The interior displays an impressive marble staircase with ornamental metal railings. Decorative plaster moldings and ceiling remnants remain above the dropped ceilings on the first floor. The building's placement on its site with surrounding open space and facing the city park defining the northern edge of the commercial district adds to its distinctive presence in the downtown.

In Ohio, several significant examples of federal Beaux Arts architecture are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In Cleveland, the Old Federal Building and Post Office (now the Howard M. Metzenbaum U.S. Courthouse, NR74001448) was completed in 1910 built in the Beaux Arts style. The East Liverpool Post Office (NR76001384) was built in a similar style in 1908. Zanesville's Post Office (1904) was also built in the Beaux Arts Style. (NR88000071) Slightly later than Ashtabula, and falling at the end of Taylor's term, the 1912-13 Beaux Arts style Massillon Post Office is included in the National Register-listed Massillon Downtown Historic District. (SG100002553) These examples are located in larger or mid-sized cities and specifically county seats. The Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building is a significant example of these classically-inspired monumental public buildings and one of a very few located in a smaller community reflecting these federal policies.

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<sup>24</sup> Boland, p 3.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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1884 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Ashtabula, Ashtabula County, Ohio. Sanborn Map Company, New York.

1889 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Ashtabula, Ashtabula County, Ohio. Sanborn Map Company, New York.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

Ashtabula County, OH

Name of Property

County and State

1917 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Ashtabula, Ashtabula County, Ohio. Sanborn Map Company, New York.

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### **Newspaper Articles**

*The Ashtabula Telegraph*

July 20, 1910

October 19, 1910

December 14, 1910

May 31, 1911

*The Star-Beacon*

October 6, 1964

October 14, 1964

February 1, 1965

May 12, 1965

November 9, 1997

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 17 | Easting: 518145 | Northing: 4634825 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property is located at the southeast corner of Main and W. 44<sup>th</sup> on parcel number 05-211-00-4-00 in Ashtabula, Ashtabula County.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the land historically associated with the property.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Darrell Hamilton with assistance from SHPO staff

organization: \_\_\_\_\_

street & number: P.O. Box 950

city or town: Ashtabula state: Ohio zip code: 44005

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

telephone: 440-319-7229

date: 2-22-2019

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

City or Vicinity: Ashtabula

County: Ashtabula State: Ohio

Photographer: SHPO Staff

Date Photographed: August 24, 2015 (photos still represent the appearance of the building, confirmed during drive by in July 2018)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashabula Post Office\_0001) View from Main Avenue, front façade, looking southeast.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

2 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0002)  
View from Main Avenue, front façade and north elevation, looking southeast.

3 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0003) View from West 44<sup>th</sup> Street, North elevation, looking south.

4 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0004) View of east elevation, looking west.

5 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0005) View of south and east elevations, looking northwest.

6 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0006) View of south elevation, looking northwest.

7 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0007)  
View from Main Avenue, front façade and south elevation, looking northeast.

8 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0008) View of detail on front façade, looking east.

9 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0009) View of detail on front façade/south elevation, looking southeast.

10 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0010) View of stairwell, first story, looking north.

11 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0011)  
View from lobby, looking toward second story railing, view facing east.

12 of 12 (OH\_AstabulaCounty\_Ashtabula Post Office\_0012) View of hallway, second story, view facing east.

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Name of Property

Ashtabula County, OH  
County and State

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



## Attachment A – Maps



**Photo Key Map, Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building.**

Attachment B – Historic Maps and Images



Figure 1: Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building, photographic postcard from c. 1920. Source: Collection of Darrell Hamilton.

## Attachment B – Historic Maps and Images



Figure 2: Streetscape Photograph, taken c. 1930. The Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building is located on the left side.  
Source: *Images of America: Ashtabula* (Arcadia, 2003).

Attachment B – Historic Maps and Images

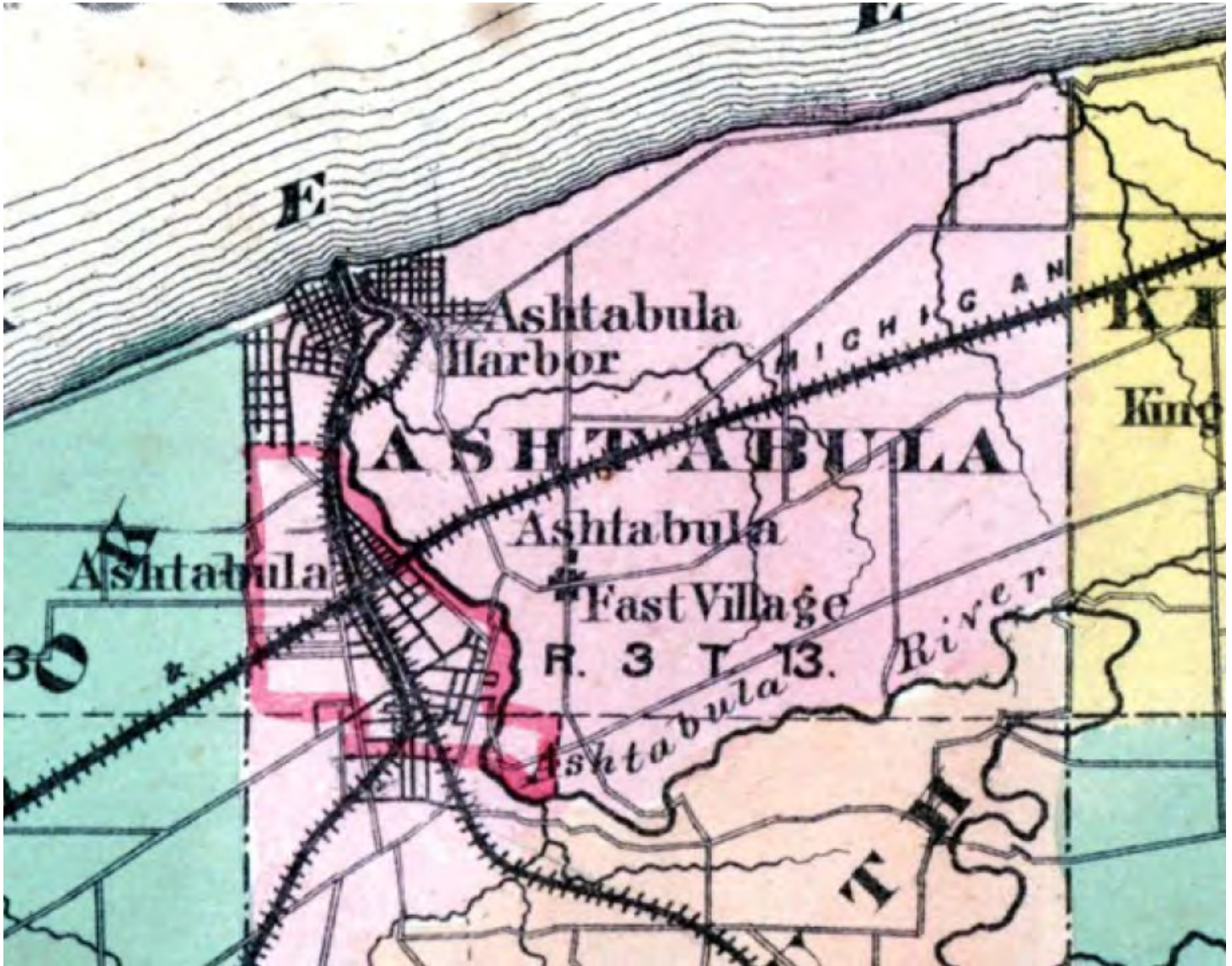


Figure 3: Ashtabula Township, 1874. The Atlas was published before the villages of Ashtabula and Ashtabula Harbor were consolidated. Source: *Atlas of Ashtabula County, Ohio* (Titus, Simmons, and Titus, 1874).

**Attachment B – Historic Maps and Images**

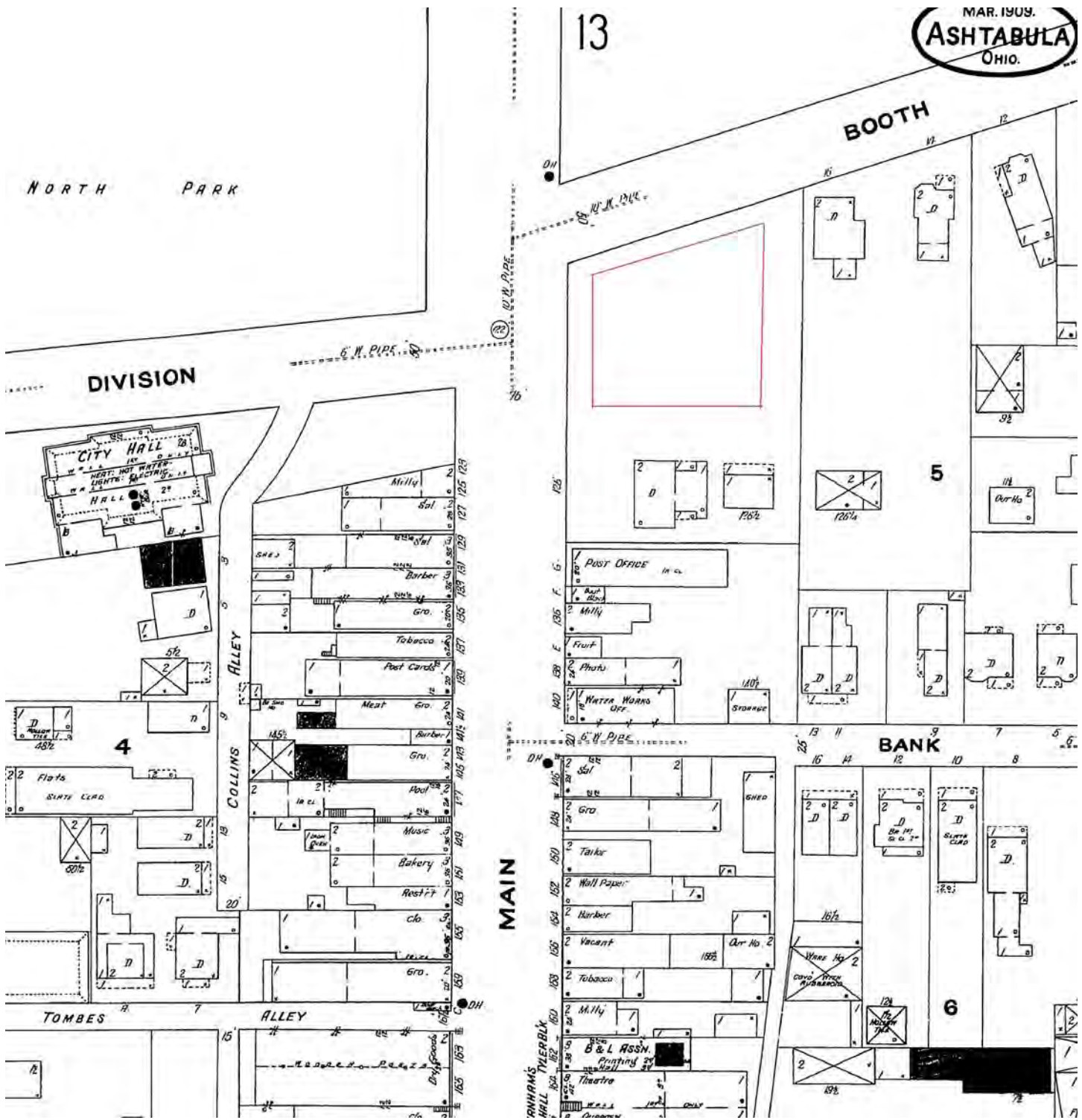


Figure 4: 1909 Sanborn Map Displaying the Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map of Ashtabula, Ohio; Sanborn Map Company, New York.

Attachment B – Historic Maps and Images

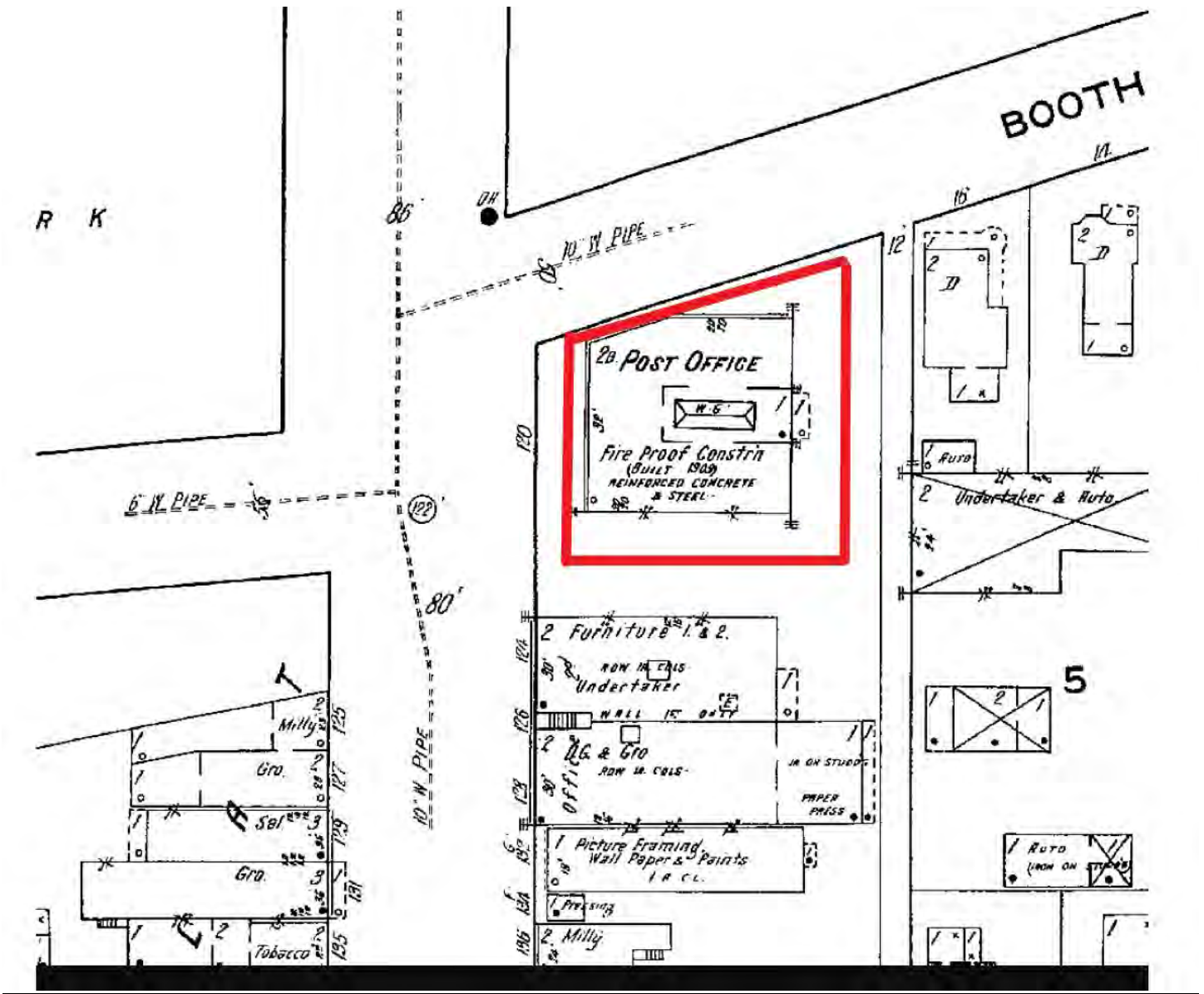


Figure 5: 1917 Sanborn Map Displaying the Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map of Ashtabula, Ohio; Sanborn Map Company, New York.

**Attachment B – Historic Maps and Images**

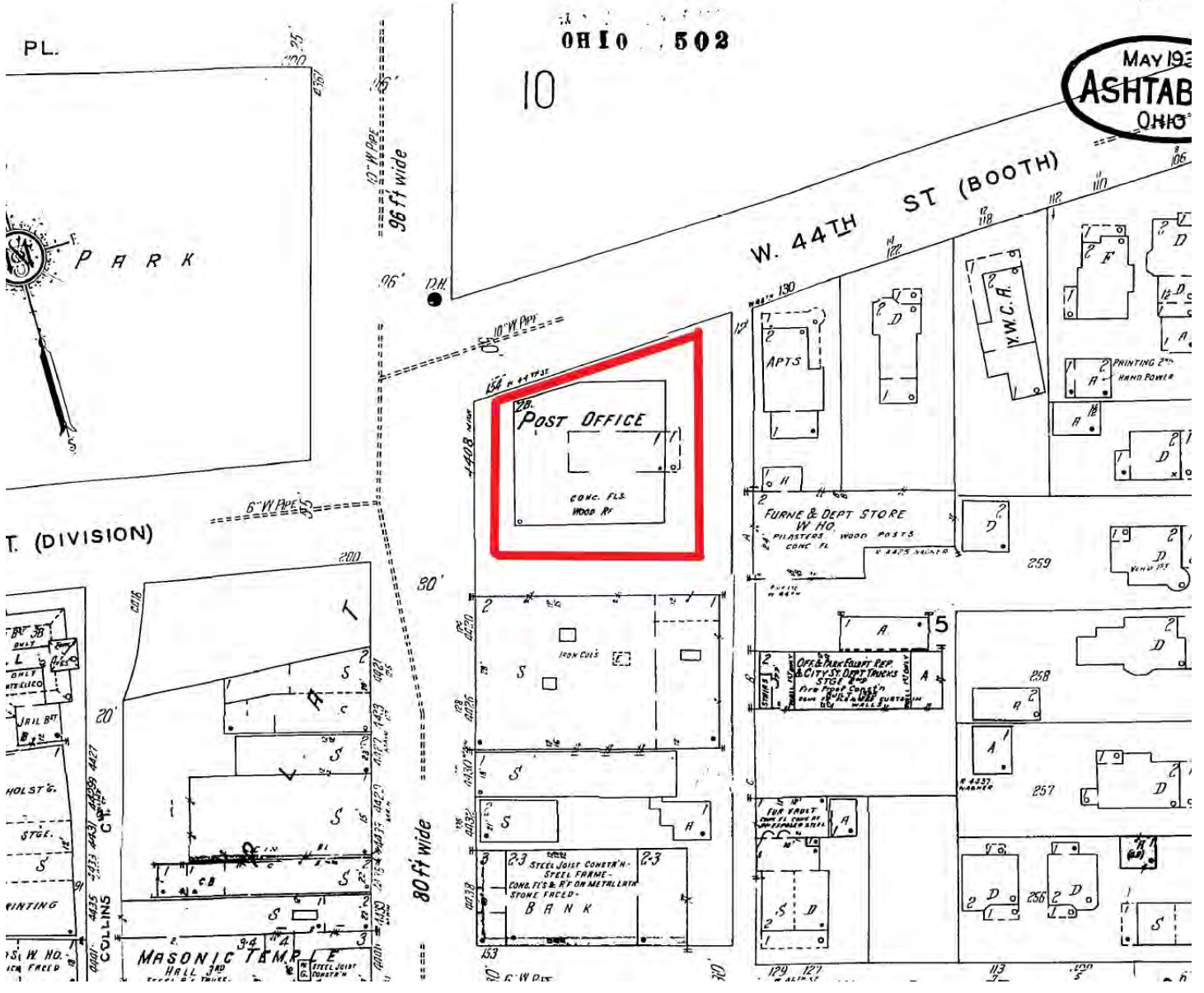


Figure 6: 1931 Sanborn Map (updated to 1947). Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map of Ashtabula, Ohio; Sanborn Map Company, New York.



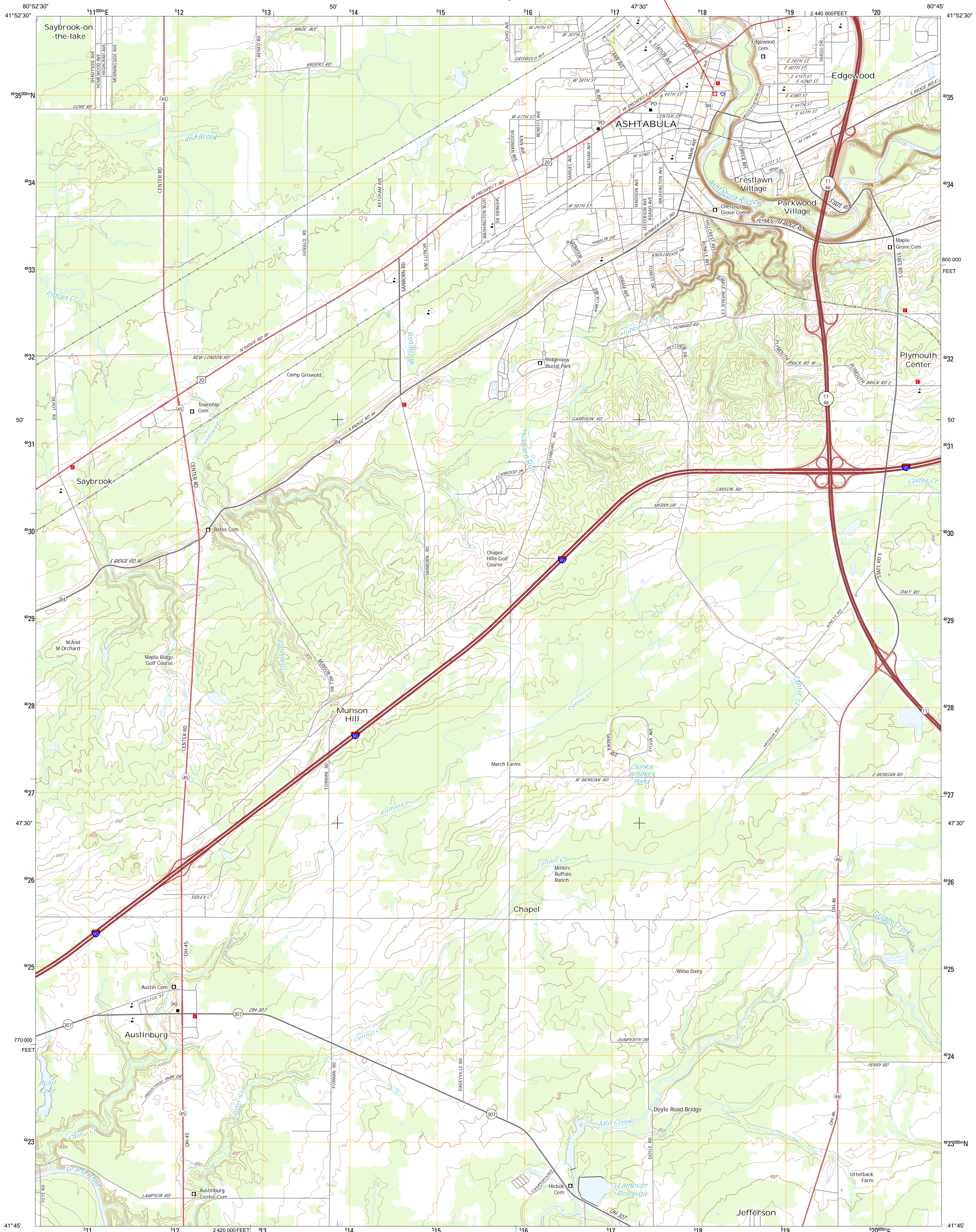
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Z 17  
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N 4634825

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Ashtabula County, OH

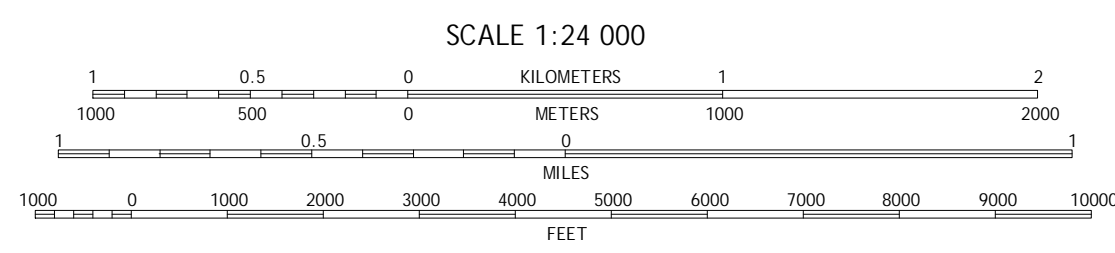
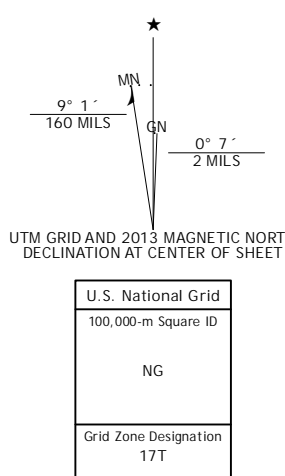
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OHIO-ASHTABULA CO.  
7.5-MINUTE SERIES



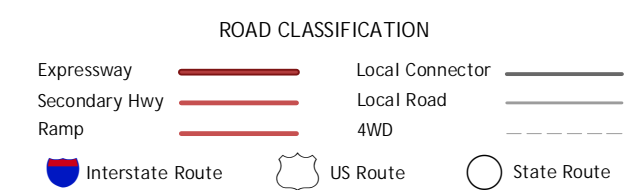
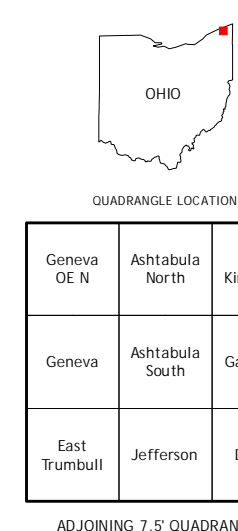
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North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)  
World Geodetic System of 1984 (WGS84) Projection and  
1 000-meter grid; Universal Transverse Mercator, Zone 17T  
10 000-foot ticks; Ohio Coordinate System of 1983 (north zone)

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reservations may not be shown. Obtain permission before  
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Imagery.....NAIP, August 2011 - October 2011  
Roads.....©2006-2013 TomTom  
Names.....GNIS, 2013  
Hydrography.....National Hydrography Dataset, 2011  
Contours.....National Elevation Dataset, 2010  
Boundaries.....Census, IBWC, IBC, USGS, 1972 - 2012  
Public Land Survey System.....BLM, 2013



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NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988  
This map was produced to conform with the  
National Geospatial Program US Topo Product Standard, 2011.  
A metadata file associated with this product is draft version 0.6.15



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2013







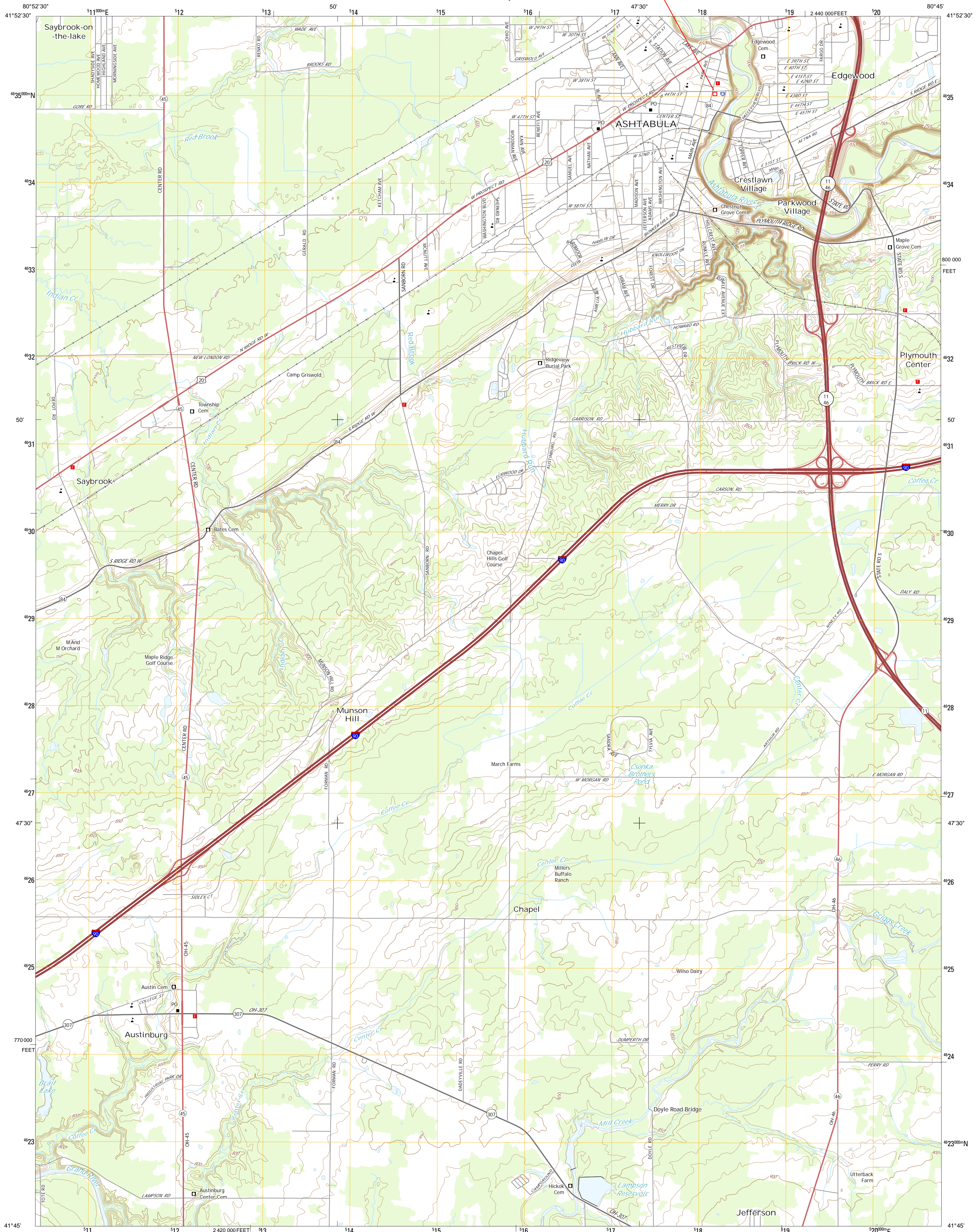
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U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Z 17  
E 518145  
N 4634825

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Ashtabula County, OH

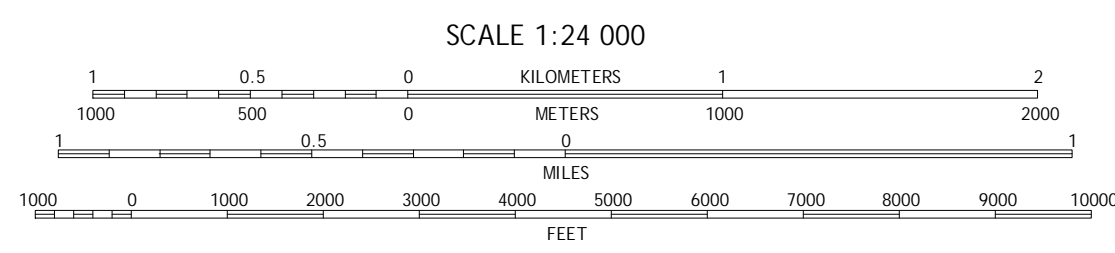
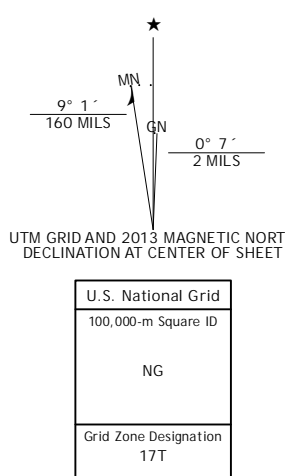
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OHIO-ASHTABULA CO.  
7.5-MINUTE SERIES



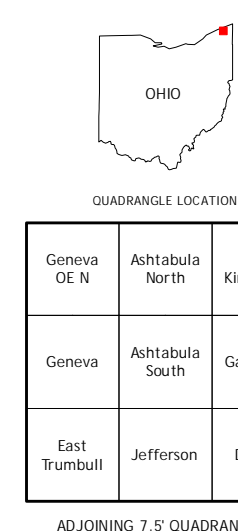
Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)  
World Geodetic System of 1984 (WGS84) Projection and  
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Boundaries.....Census, IBWC, IBC, USGS, 1972 - 2012  
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NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988  
This map was produced to conform with the  
National Geospatial Program US Topo Product Standard, 2011.  
A metadata file associated with this product is draft version 0.6.15



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Expressway	Local Connector
Secondary Hwy	Local Road
Ramp	4WD
Interstate Route	US Route
	State Route

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Geneva NE	Ashtabula North	North Kingsville
Geneva NW	Ashtabula South	Gageville
East Trumbull	Jefferson	Darsent

ASHTABULA SOUTH, OH  
2013





ASHTABULA MUNICIPAL BUILDING

MUNICIPAL BUILDING

ASK NOT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY  
CAN DO FOR YOU.  
ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR  
YOUR COUNTRY.

BY JOHN F. KENNEDY  
SEPTEMBER 12, 1961



ASK NOT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY  
CAN DO FOR YOU.  
ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR  
YOUR COUNTRY.





ONE  
WAY  
←



ONE  
WAY  
←









MUNICIPAL  
BUILDING









UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building

Multiple Name:

State & County: OHIO, Ashtabula

Date Received: 5/1/2019      Date of Pending List: 5/16/2019      Date of 16th Day: 5/31/2019      Date of 45th Day: 6/17/2019      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100004053

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      6/17/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary AOS: Government, Architecture; POS: 1910-1965; LOS: local  
Comments:

Recommendation/ NR Criteria: A & C  
Criteria

Reviewer Lisa Deline

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2239

Date 6/17/19

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
NPS TRANSMITTAL CHECK LIST

OHIO HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
800 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Columbus, OH 43211  
(614)-298-2000

The following materials are submitted on April 22, 2019  
For nomination of the Ashtabula Post to the National Register of  
Historic Places: Office's Federal Building, Ashtabula County, OH

- Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form  
 Paper  PDF
- Multiple Property Nomination Cover Document  
 Paper  PDF
- Multiple Property Nomination form  
 Paper  PDF
- Photographs  
 Prints  TIFFs
- CD with electronic images
- Original USGS map(s)  
 Paper  Digital
- Sketch map(s)/Photograph view map(s)/Floor plan(s)  
 Paper  PDF
- Piece(s) of correspondence  
 Paper  PDF
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

- Please provide a substantive review of this nomination
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_  
Constitute a majority of property owners
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



April 22, 2019

Julie Ernstein, Acting Chief, National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Ernstein:

Enclosed please find four new National Register nominations and one National Register Amendment for Ohio. All appropriate notification procedures have been followed for the new nomination submissions.

NEW NOMINATION

Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building  
Open Air School  
Uptown Westerville Historic District  
Sisler, Dr. Louis, House

COUNTY

Ashtabula  
Franklin  
Franklin  
Summit

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION AMENDMENT

Fort Industry Square Amendment

COUNTY

Lucas

The enclosed disks contains the true and correct copy of the information to the National Register of Historic Places nominations for Ashtabula Post Office and Federal Building; Open Air School; Sisler, Dr. Louis, House; and Fort Industry Square Amendment.

The Fort Industry Square Amendment is additional information, the National Register boundaries for the nomination are not increased or decreased.

If you have questions or comments about these documents, please contact the National Register staff in the Ohio Historic Preservation Office at (614) 298-2000.

Sincerely,

*for*

Lox A. Logan, Jr.  
Executive Director and CEO  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
Ohio History Connection

Enclosures